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RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 4469
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RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 9740
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 0983
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1400

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2016
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#) [FR](#) [SP](#) [SZ](#)
SUBJECT: LIKELIHOOD OF GOC-FARC HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE
BLEAK, BUT LOW LEVEL TALKS CONTINUE

REF: (A) BOGOTA 9277 (B) BOGOTA 9779

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

[11](#). (U) Prospects for GOC-FARC talks on a humanitarian exchange of FARC political hostages for imprisoned terrorists are bleak, but low-level efforts to resume contact continue. Speaking at the Iberoamerican Summit, President Uribe left open the door to talks, but only if the FARC stops terrorist attacks. The FARC blamed Uribe for halting talks, but reiterated its desire to conclude an exchange. Public opinion backs Uribe's decision. End summary.

Uribe Says Attacks Must Stop

[12](#). (C) Uribe told the Iberoamerican Summit on November 5 he would not negotiate with the FARC unless it abandoned terrorist attacks. The GOC and the FARC had exchanged media statements about a humanitarian exchange of FARC-held political hostages for imprisoned FARC terrorists in late September and early October (ref A). The discussions came to an abrupt halt the day after a FARC car bombing in Bogota, when Uribe publicly revoked GOC outreach efforts to the terrorist group (ref B). Referring to the car bombing, Uribe told the Summit that Colombia could not move towards peace if the FARC responded with car bombs. Uribe left open the possibility of restarting discussions with the FARC, but only if it stops terrorist attacks. Spanish President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero supported Uribe at the Summit, agreeing that "one cannot have a dialogue with violence."

FARC Says Open to Negotiations, Blames Uribe for Failure

[13](#). (U) On October 27, a FARC Secretariat statement asserted Uribe had used the car bombing as an excuse to break off

talks, and reiterated an interest in a humanitarian exchange.

FARC commander Ivan Marquez repeated on October 31 the FARC's willingness to make an exchange and mocked Uribe's statement that the military would be able to rescue the hostages.

Low Level Talks Ongoing

¶4. (C) Presidential advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria told us Alvaro Leyva remains the only interlocutor with real contacts to the FARC (ref A). Gaviria met Leyva on October 25 to review the government's position that the FARC must stop attacks for talks to resume. He assumed the October 27 communique reflected Leyva's intervention with the FARC, but when they spoke again on October 28, Leyva would not confirm that he had contacted the group.

Public Reaction Mixed

¶5. (C) The public supports Uribe's decision to break off talks with the FARC by a margin of 56 to 38, according to a October 29 Gallup poll. The same poll found declines in the percentage of people who believe Colombia is more secure now than a year ago, who feel the military can defeat the FARC, and who approve of Uribe's handling of the conflict. Senate President Dilian Francisca Toro Torres responded on October 20 to Uribe's ending discussions by stating that the welfare of the hostages was paramount and that she hoped the humanitarian exchange was still possible. Liberal party official and former Defense Minister Rafael Pardo told us

November 2 that while prospects for a humanitarian exchange are bleak, the issue will not disappear due to pressure from the hostage' families, France, and other members of the international community.

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